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An Essay upon Mania a potu

By

Charles Randolph of Philad.a

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In the whole catalogue of vices, there is not one which holds a more conspicuous station than that of intemperance in the use of ardent spirits; Both on account of its prejudicial influence upon the morals, as well as its ruinous effects upon the constitu=tions of those who unfortunately become addicted to it. It is indeed a cause of regret to see so many, who appear every way en=dowed by nature to fill exalted and honorable stations in society, prostitute the most splendid talents and extensive ac=quirements at a shrine so detestable and debasing. Were I disposed to moralize upon this subject, I could collect a list of evils attending it that would fill a volume, But such is not my intention, which is merely to describe one of its most serious and fatal effects, and one which at the same time comes more imme=diately under the notice of the physician.

That disease which has been termed by various authors, "The Brain fever of drunkenness" "Delirium Tremens", "Mania à potu", "Mania à Temulentia" "Febris Temulentia" &c. &c. is the one which I have selected for the subject of this essay; The name I most approve and which I shall adopt is Mania à potu.

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in persons addicted to habitual drunkenness; But I have also known it to occur in persons, who although not in the constant practice of drinking to any excess, had perhaps in one or two instances been guilty of this species of debauchery to an inor=dinate degree, and this joined with some peculiar state of the system at the time, excited the disease, when probably under different circumstances it would have had no such effect.

It is the sudden diminution, or total abstraction of this inordinate excitement, that generally brings the disease into action. Could these miserable beings to use their own language, "taper off gradually", lessening by degrees the quan=tity of their drink, it is probable they would escape this dreadful malady; But in many cases the very last shilling perhaps has been expended for this poisonous article, proba=bly too at the expense of their regular and necessary food, and even this is likewise consumed; then between the cravings of hunger and the horrid feelings which they endure on being deprived of that stimulus, which from habit has become almost essential to their very existence, reason forsakes

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her throne, leaving them in that deplorable condition which forms the subject of this essay.

Spirituous liquors of every description are capable of producing this disease; but from the fact of its occuring almost exclusively among the lower ranks of society, whose drink consists for the most part of whiskey, I have thought it possible that this article produces the disease more frequent=ly than any other kind of liquor. This however is mere surmise, and if it should hereafter be proved to be the case, can be of but little practicle importance, as it would not in the least alter the plan of treatment.

As to the modus operandi of spirituous liquors in producing Mania à potu, it is by no means an easy task to explain, nor will I at this time attempt it; My intention at present is merely to relate the different symptoms attending it, as well as the various modes which have been practised for its cure, making such remarks on each, as from close observation I believe to be correct.

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troubled with at the commencement of an attack, are a sensation of lassitude, accompanied with slight chills or crawls, pain in the head, a sense of weight and op=
=pression at the pit of the stomach, followed by nausea and vomiting. At this early period of the attack the bowels are generally constipated. The appearance of the face, that peculiar to the drunkard, very much flushed and bloated; The eyes are also much injected, and constantly rolling in all directions as if following or seeking some particular object. The tongue is always more or less furd, and generally moist, but sometimes it is exceedingly foul and dry; In fact I have seen the tongue of a person labouring under this disease, similar in every respect to that of a person with Typhus Fever. The pulse is generally frequent, sometimes weak and compressible, and at others it is quick, strong, and tense. The skin is generally cool and moist, but sometimes it is hot and dry. To these symptoms there is always added great nervous irritability, watchfulness and trembling of the whole body, but more particularly of the head and hands. The mind

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also participates in this general derangement, it becomes wandering and confused, especially at night, when these pa=
=tients are always worse.

As the disease advances all the symptoms which I have enumerated are aggravated, and new ones make their appearance. The mental faculties in particular, from being partially deranged, and that principally during the night, become so now entirely; Neither day nor night are they in pos=
=session of their reason; and of the enjoyment of sleep they are totally deprived, by some horrid apprehension of fancied danger. It is with much difficulty and persuasion that they are prevailed on to lie down in their beds, and should you even succeed in accomplishing this you will find it impossi=
=ble to keep them there unless by actual force. Such is the restless and watchful state of their minds that they will immediately get up again, put on their clothes, pull their beds to pieces and scatter the bedclothes over the room; And this they will persist in doing, disregarding alike per=
=suasions and threats. In some instances they imagine themselves surrounded by persons whose wish is to torture or kill them,

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or, that they are covered with snakes, or some other dangerous or loathsome animals. Sometimes they think that they have been taken up and imprisoned upon suspicion of their having committed some heinous crime, as robbery or murder, and are continually protesting their innocence, and endeavouring to impress all persons who approach them with the same convictions. I was once called to see a man in the Alms House of this city, labouring under this disease who, the moment I opened his door jumped up and assailed my ears with a volley of the most earnest assurances, that he never had been concerned in digging up those dead bodies which he was charged with, and begged that I would interest myself to get him released; Nor were all the assurances that I could give him sufficient to convince him that no person did suspect him of being guilty of any such crimes. This man entirely recovered, and upon being interrogated whether he ever had been engaged in that kind of business, most solemnly declared that he never had, nor could he possibly conceive what should give rise to so strange an idea.

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Frequently their imaginations are filled with objects of dread and horror, as monsters or evil spirits, whose intentions they suppose are to destroy or carry them off to a place of torment. Again, they fancy they hear strange noises in some corner of their own, or in an adjoining room, as, the groans of dying persons; Or that they see spots of various colours, or balls of fire floating through the atmosphere. It is by no means an uncommon sight in entering the cells of this class of patients to see them pushing with all their might against the walls, under an apprehension that they are falling in upon them; I have seen them thus employed for days, the perspiration rolling off of them almost in streams. Or, what is equally distressing they sometimes imagine the house to be turning upside down, and then we see them staggering and falling down, as though such was really the case. "In short" to use the language of a distinguished writer on this subject, "They are either earnestly engaged with business immediately before them, as calculations, buildings, counting or picking up money, setting accounts, or some such

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imaginary employment, or their attention is wholly engrossed by conspiracies, suspicions, dangers or the like; and it is remarkable to observe, how the expressions of the counte= =nance vary according to the nature of the predominant passions.

The symptoms which mark the fatal terminations of this complaint are, an aggravation of all those which I have enumerated above, such as increased debility, constant watchfulness, excessive irritation, frequent vomitings, cold clammy skin, pulse very quick and extremely feeble, haggard countenance, involuntary evacuations, subsultus tendinum, convulsions, coma, or apoplexy, followed very soon by death itself. Those on the other hand which lead us to hope for a more favourable result, are first of all that which might be emphatically termed, a Critical sleep: This is truly a sine qua non in this disease; For notwithstanding I have myself known two cases, and have met with as many more in the writings of other persons on this subject, which terminated

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fatally even after this happy event had taken place, Still I do believe that in nine cases out of ten, the result will be favourable; And we well know that without this is effected, recovery never would take place: But having accomplished this desirable end, patients of this description generally speedily get well. It is by no means uncommon to see them awa=
=ken from a sound sleep perfectly rational, and sensible of their situation, though perhaps a few hours befor their falling into this restoring slumber they were perfectly maniacal.

In forming a prognosis as to the probable event of Mania a potu, there are several circumstances to be taken into consideration, as, the age habits and constitution of the patient, the manner of their attack, and the violence of the symp=
=toms &c. In youth and a constitution not too much impaired by a long continued course of excessive hard drinking, when the attack is unaccompanied also by much mental derangement, we may calculate

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with some degree of confidence upon a speedy recovery. But on the other hand (as has been remarked by that justly celebrated author Dr. Armstrong,) "Those patients who have been driven to intoxication from some great affliction, are generally in imminent danger; for during the progress of the complaint, their raving turns incessantly upon the recent calamity, and produces an irritation and exhaustion most difficult to be counteracted. But confirmed drunkards who have previously laboured under chronic Hepatitis, or some similar organic affection, perhaps stand the worst chance."

The appearances which presented themselves in our examinations of subjects who died of Mania à potu, were similar to those of other persons who have been engaged in the same investigation: Inflamation & congestions in the Brain and Liver, particularly the latter, attended in many instances with an enlargement of the same: The Spleen and Stomach also bore marks of some derangement. But whether these appearances had any connexion with the proximate cause of the disease, or whether they were

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Having now finished all that I have to say of the nature, symptoms and terminations of this disease, I shall next proceed to give an account of the different modes which have been employed, for counteracting, and determining it to a favourable result; And in doing this, I fear that I shall necessarily become somewhat tedious, as it is my wish to enter pretty fully into the subject.

Two modes have been adopted by Physicians for treating Mania à potu; By one set it is managed almost exclusively by Evacuants, as Emetics, Purgatives, Bloodletting, Blisters &c, and according to their own accounts with signal success: Whilst another set rely entirely on Opium, Brandy, wine, volatile alkali, Turpentine, and the other Stimulants. These too are equally sanguine, and their records of cases bear ample testimony to the cures they have effected. Both are right as far as they extend, they are however applicable to different cases, and to

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different stages of the complaint. — We propose in the next place to point out the different circumstances to which the several remedies are indicated, and shall begin first, with Emetics. The use of this class of medicines in Mania à potu, I believe originated with Doctor Klapp of this city, he having remarked, "that the subjects of Mania in consequence of strong drink, are very apt to labour under a vomiting for several days before they become deranged, and that when the mental disease begins the vomiting ceases; and having observed also if puking spon= =taneously or accidentally occurs, while a person is affected with this species of insanity, a period is shortly put to the disease. By these observations I was very readily led into the following reasoning. If puking spontaneously will prevent for several days, and even is able to cure Mania of this kind, why would not the administration of suitable Emetics produce similar good effects?" — Impressed with such ideas as these, (as is generally the case with persons who think they have made some very important discove= =ry,) he became (If I may be permitted to use the expression)

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completely enamoured with the practice, and carried it to an extent I think, not warranted by the success attending it. From what I have myself seen I should say, Emetics are proper only in cases occurring in patients of tolerably good constitutions, who have not long been in the habit of drinking, and where there is little debility present. In cases of this kind it must be confessed, that Emetics are of very great utility, to evacuate the stomach of any offensive matter with which it is frequently loaded, and at the same time to increase the susceptibility of that organ to the action of other medicines. But exhibited under contrary circumstances, as in the cases of old confirmed drunkards, or in any other cases attended with much de=
=bility, I consider Emetics, not only inefficacious, but highly improper and even dangerous remedies. I have seen a patient with a moderately full pulse, to whom a moderate puke was administered, sink rapidly under the operation of it, notwithstanding it was immediately suc=
=ceeded by stimulants of the most powerful kind, as Turpen=
=tine, Brandy, Laudanum, &c. The Emetics generally used

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in Mania à potu are Tartarized Antimony in doses of 10. to 30 grains, dissolved in as many ounces of water and a table spoonful to be given every 10. or 15 minutes untill it operates. Or Specacuanha in ℥ss. to ℥i doses, either alone or combined with grij. to grij of Tart. Antimonii; or with grs x. to xii of Sulp. Zinc. — But in consequence of the amazing torpidity of the stomach, it is sometimes necessary to give these articles in much larger doses: In one instance I gave a patient xxxgrs of Specac. and x gr. of Sulp. Zinc every half hour untill he had taken five doses, making in all 150 grains of Specacuanha, and 50 of Sulp Zinc; and the vomiting which followed was quite inconsiderable.

Of Purgatives. As regards the use of this class of remedies, some contrariety of opinion prevails among medical men: Some esteeming them as even dangerous, and others considering them as by no means important. Among those entertaining the latter opinion I may mention Dr. Potter of Baltimore, who has observed, that although the necessity of a soluble state of the intestines in almost every

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condition of fever, it would appear from repeated observa=
=tion, that cathartics are not to ranked among the radical
means in the treatment of this fever; and indeed they are but
feeble auxillaries, except in such cases as are attended with,
and fomented by some vitiated secretion." The majority of
Physicians however, look upon them as medicines of great val=
=ue, capable of fulfiling many of the indications for which
Emetics are used, and unattended with any of those danger=
=ous effects which have followed from the operation of those
articles. Among the advocates for the employment of this
class of medicines in the treatment of Mania a potu, one
of the most distinguished is Doctor Armstrong, who says,
that they should always precede the use of Opium; He
then makes the following remarks; "If I had sooner known
the necessity of this precaution, I believe that my success
would have been greater: But as I fell into the error of
administering Opium in every stage and variety of this
complaint, I am most anxious that it may be corrected
for the sake of others." This practice he thinks applicable
to occasional as well as habitual drunkards, with this

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limitation that in the latter cases it be pursued, "only in the early period of the disease." In the advanced stages, laxative enemata should be substituted. The Purgatives most commonly used in these cases are, Calomel, Salap, Sulph. Magnesia, Castor oil, Senna Tea, &c; But in cases of obstinate constipation, it becomes necessary to administer the more drastic articles.

Venesection. This is practised by some physicians under a supposition that the Brain is the principal seat of the disease, and as, in Phrenitis, they consider blood-letting the best means of affording relief.— One of the strongest advocates for the use of the lancet in this complaint is Doctr. Potter of Baltimore. He has said, "that in young subjects, and even in patients advanced in life, but recently attacked, we have frequently bled to the amount of Sixty, or Seventy ounces; and several times an hundred in three or four days, although (generally) small portions only can be with propriety taken away at once, in the collapsed state which almost always succeeds to the abuse of every form of alkohol; there are exceptions

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to this rule:" — This is carrying the practice to a greater length than the most energetic practitioners of this city have ever dared, as far as I am acquainted. From what I have seen myself of this disease I should say, that the number of cases demanding the remedy at all, are very limited, and those generally occur in persons of strong constitutions, which have not been impaired by long continued intemperance. Topical Bleeding by leeches or cups I have often seen of great benefit, indeed there are many cases in which this may be resorted to, with decided advantage. If it is necessary to open a vein, the orifice should be small, and the blood allowed to come away slowly, carefully watching the effect it produces.

Blisters I have repeatedly applied, to the head and back of the neck, to the calves of the legs, wrists, and ankles, but so far as I am capable of judging, with but little advantage: I have found them almost invariably to increase the nervous irritability, and also the restlessness and watchfulness. — As regards the administration

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of those remedies which may be strictly termed evacuants, I would remark, that they are applicable only to the first stage of the disease.

— I shall in the next place consider those remedies of an opposite character, I allude to Stimulants; These I conceive to be more particularly adapted to the advanced stages of this disease, and which are capable of fulfilling the most important indications. The first article of this class which I shall notice is, Opium. To whom we are indebted for the introduction of this well known and important remedy in Mania à potu, I believe is not distinctly known; But the experience of a large majority of the profession, has proved it to be a happy discovery for mankind. Opium is given in a variety of forms and combinations; In sub= =stance, and in Tincture, or, combined with Asafetida, Camphor, Calomel, Turpentine, and many other articles, all suited to different forms and stages of the disease. If the indication be merely to put the patient to sleep, Opium, either in substance or, the Tincture will answer the purpose very well; But if the case be accompanied with

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much nervous irritability and weakness, we will derive great advantage by combining with it either, Asafatida, or Camphor.

It will sometimes so happen that the Physician is not consulted until the disease has lasted four or five days, and perhaps a week: In such cases he will most probably find the patient very much debilitated, with perhaps an irritable stomach, rejecting every thing that is swallowed, attended also with a constipated condition of the bowels. The period is now certainly passed when evacuants are admissible. It is in cases of this description that I have fairly tried the favourite practice of Doctr. Armstrong; His prescription consisted of gssij to ivgr. of calomel and grss of Opium, and I have had very reason to be satisfied with its success. But I found it necessary to repeat the dose much oftener than he recommends; Instead of one of these powders every six hours, I gave one every two or three hours, until the patient had taken ten powders; By which time I would have insinuated as much as XXX. or XLgrs. of calomel into his stomach and bowels, which (if not without,) would with the assistance of a little Senna Tea or, Castor oil have the effect of opening the bowels, and

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also by aid of the opium, quiet the stomach and perhaps put the patient to sleep. But it is in the cases of old confirmed drunkards, labouring under a chronic inflamation, or some other disorder of some of the chylopoietic viscera, as the stomach, liver, or spleen, that I have seen this combination, more especially when pushed to a salivation, evince the most astonishing powers. —— Opium with Turpentine is another preparation which in the practice at the Philad^a. Alms House has proved of great value, in the last or sinking stage of the disease; In fact I know of no mixture that will more certainly arouse the declining energies of the system than this: It may very often be substituted for Brandy or Wine, which when it can with safety, always should be done. The Carbonate of Ammonia is likewise found useful in this stage of mania à potu. Wine and Brandy in some cases cannot possibly be dispensed with; But when we consider that they were the original cause of the complaint, and that our administering them, is keeping up a habit most deleterious in its effects, I think it becomes the duty of the Physician when it is practicable, to employ such means alone,

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say 2 ounces of the Tincture to a Bottle of Porter is also an
excellent remedy, possessing the several properties of a
Stimulant, Tonic and Anodyne. ——

—— I have yet one remedy to mention before closing
this part of the subject, and that is the Shower Bath. This
I have known to act more speedily and effectually, in calming
and subduing the most violent, and unmanageable of this class
of patients, than any other remedy which I have ever seen
applied. But in using so powerful a remedy great discrim=
=ination and judgement should be exercised, not only in
selecting proper subjects, but also as to the quantity of water
to be showered upon them. In the application of this remedy
we must in an especial manner be influenced by the
general appearance of the patient. I have found it par=
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=plaint, occuring in persons of robust, healthy constitutions;
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we must be governed altogether by its effects, and be guided by its influence upon the pulse, exactly as we would in bleeding under similar circumstances. The first time I used the shower bath, was in the case of a black man, of strong constitution, and one who had not long been addicted to intemperance. On account of his great bodily strength we found it extremely difficult to manage him; He was bled, cupped, puked and purged, without much effect; he had been in the house two days and nights and had never for one moment closed his eyes in sleep, notwithstanding large doses of opiate medicines were given him each night for that purpose. Considering this a case in which our remedy was clearly indicated, I had him carried to the bath-house and showered well, untill I had reduced his pulse considerably; He was then brought out quiet as a lamb, rubbed perfectly dry with warm flannel cloths, took a large draught of warm Wine whey with fifty drops of Laudanum, and in the course of an hour and a half he fell into a sound sleep,

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which continued nearly six hours: From that time his recovery was rapid, requiring nothing more than a little general treatment. — Encouraged by the success attending this case, I have since carried the practice to a considerable extent, and generally with equal advantage in similar cases. — Doctor Armstrong was in the habit of dashing salt water over the bodies of his patients; This method for want of proper conveniences I have never tried, but can very readily believe it a useful remedy. — The tepid affusions I have also tried, and I think with some advantage; the two remedies however are applicable to very opposite stages and forms of the disease: The shower bath is admissible only, in the first stage of the complaint, whereas the tepid affusions are more particularly adapted to the latter stages. —

These are the remedies which are gene=
=rally employed for the cure of Mania à potu: Little however will all the exertions of the most

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skilful Physician avail, unless aided by the attentions of such persons, as have the immediate charge of his patients in his absence. It should be the business of nurses to keep the patients as quiet as possible, to enter their cells no oftner than necessity demands, and to be particularly careful to prevent other persons not even relations excepted from going in and conversing with them: This I have repeatedly known to retard the cure by occasioning additional irritation and of course increasing the excitement. By a celebrated Physician of this city (the late Doctor Kuhn) this part of our treatment was relied upon solely without the assistance of medicine of any kind. His plan was to confine the patient in a dark room into which he permitted no persons to enter, he gave neither nourishment nor medicine until they had slept soundly; And it is said that his success was equal to that of almost any other Practitioner. The diet of Mania à potu patients should consist of light but nourishing

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articles of food, such as rich soups, or Gruels made rich with spices wine &c; But solid food of all kinds should be carefully avoided as difficult of digestion, and likely to act as extraneous or irritating substances.

Lastly, I would recommend that kind and affectionate treatment be extended towards this unfortu=
=nate class of people, not only because it is most consis=
=tent with the best principles of humanity, but also as the most successful means of restraining their passions, and effecting their recovery.

No 18 Q.

1825

Mania a Potu.

Robert E Kerr